

Remarks by Commissioner Kevin J. Martin
To the Kickoff of the Federal Rural Wireless Outreach Initiative
July 2, 2003
Washington, DC
As Prepared

Thank you for this invitation to be here with you this morning. The issues confronting rural America are extremely important and timely for us to address, and these issues are especially important to me. I grew up in a rural area outside of Charlotte, North Carolina, so I understand how important telecommunications and broadband services are to folks living in rural and remote areas.

Telecommunications has been responsible for much of this nation's economic growth in recent years, and I am hopeful that continued deployment will lead to a new period of growth. In order to fully recognize and take advantage of this growth, however, we must make certain that all Americans are given the opportunity to participate. And specifically, we must continue to encourage deployment of telecommunications and broadband services to rural areas. Deployment of wireless services to rural America is particularly critical since wireless technologies provide the potential to reach people in more efficient ways. That's why I am so pleased to be here this morning in support of this new outreach initiative.

This event marks the beginning of a focus on rural America, which is long overdue. And it also marks the beginning of a new relationship between two agencies.

On behalf of the Federal Communications Commission, we are pleased to be a partner in the kickoff of this outreach initiative. We at the FCC look forward to developing our activities with not only the RUS, but also with other agencies, industry, and rural communities. We are particularly looking forward to working with those communities who recently received RUS's broadband awards.

As you have heard already this morning, this program's mission is to exchange information between agencies, governments, rural communities, and potential wireless industry entities regarding development and telecommunications access programs. As Chairman Powell indicated earlier, the project has 4 specific goals:

1. Exchange information about products and services each agency offers to promote the expansion of telecommunications services in rural America.
2. Harmonize our rules, regulations and processes whenever possible to maximize the benefits for rural America.
3. Educate our partners and other agencies about our offerings.
4. Expand our partnership to the extent that it is mutually beneficial to other agencies.

This event is the first in a series of events to come. We look forward to your participation and input. Please give us any feedback you may have along the way. We will be launching a joint website, and we encourage your correspondence.

Finally, on behalf of the Commission, I would like to thank John Muletta and Nancy Plon of the FCC for their hard work on this project. I would also like to recognize the important work of both RUS Administrator Legg for her dedication and leadership, and Assistant Administrator Purcell for her enthusiasm.

If Administrator Legg and Assistant Administrator Purcell would please come forward, we would like to present each of you with a clock to mark the synchronization of our two agencies as we work together in support of rural America.

We look forward to developing our partnership with USDA, expanding the partnership with other agencies, interacting with industry, and addressing the needs of rural communities. Together I am hopeful we can make a difference in the development of wireless communications in rural America.